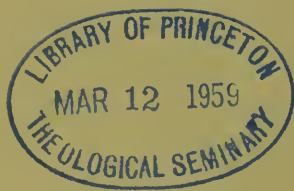


A. Moody Stuart

The Fall of Babylon

BS649
.B3S9



BS649
.B359

THE FALL OF BABYLON:

ITS PREDICTION NOT ANONYMOUS.

BY

A. MOODY STUART, D.D.

Edinburgh:

JOHN MACLAREN & SON, PRINCES STREET.

LONDON: JAMES NISBET & CO.

GLASGOW: DAVID BRYCE & SON.

1880.

BS649
B359

THE FALL OF BABYLON:

ITS PREDICTION NOT ANONYMOUS.

BY

A. MOODY ✓ STUART, D.D.

Edinburgh:

JOHN MACLAREN & SON, PRINCES STREET.

LONDON: JAMES NISBET & CO.

GLASGOW: DAVID BRYCE & SON.

1880.

v

EDINBURGH :
PRINTED BY LORIMER AND GILLIES,
31 ST. ANDREW SQUARE.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
THE FALL OF BABYLON,	5
I. THE CONJECTURE THAT ANONYMOUS PROPHETS IN BABYLON FORE- TOLD ITS FALL,	7
II. THE RESPECTFUL LOYALTY OF THE KNOWN EXILE PROPHETS TO THE CHALDEAN KINGS,	14
III. THE UNSPARING DENUNCIATIONS OF BABYLON BY THE OLDER PROPHETS IN JERUSALEM,	20
IV. THE INFATUATION OF PUBLISHING SUCH THREATS IN BABYLON, AND THE CULPABILITY OF PUBLISHING THEM ANONYMOUSLY,	24

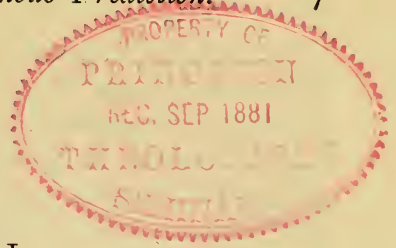
THE FALL OF BABYLON.

BABYLON, "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency," after all its other power has long ceased, still retains the power of attracting an unfailling interest on account of the extremes of its history in its ancient greatness and its present desolation. The restoration of "The Golden City," with its hundred gates of solid brass, with its walls three hundred and fifty feet in height and more than eighty in breadth, with its temple and tower of Belus, with its magnificent palace and marvellous gardens, was designed by Alexander the Great; but the attempt was suddenly arrested by his death, and its desolate site has for long ages been the habitation of the "wild beast of the desert, and of doleful creatures." To the Christian community, the chief interest in the extreme contrast of the past and the present lies in the prophecies that foretold the doom of Babylon as the great enemy of Israel, and the grand centre of ancient heathenism with its idolatry, sensuality, and cruelty.

These prophecies have been received and valued by the Jewish nation and the Christian Church as amongst the greatest predictions in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the most remarkable attestations to the truth of the Word of the Lord, which endureth for ever; and their well-known authors, living in Jerusalem, have been honoured as bearing the highest names among the Hebrew pro-

phets. But for nearly a hundred years the truth of the received dates and authors has been disputed by the school of critics which claims to be specially scientific. Their conjecture is that the writers of the prophecies are anonymous, that the date is toward the close of the Exile, and the place in Babylon, in the city or the province or the kingdom.

In the following pages it will be our endeavour to show that this conjecture, which is founded on no historical fact, is contrary to the Scriptures; is inconsistent with the known history of the period; is incompatible with obedience to the Divine command, and with a regard for their own lives on the part of the exiles; and rests on a moral contradiction by supposing a good man capable of exposing the elders of Israel to a cruel death by concealing his own name whilst he issues threats of destruction against the King of Babylon, who holds them in his grasp.



CHAPTER I.

*THE CONJECTURE THAT ANONYMOUS PROPHETS
IN BABYLON FORETOLD ITS FALL.*

IN this part of our subject we shall notice, first, the origin and nature of the conjecture, and next the conjecture itself.

1. Our present argument is neither with blasphemers, like Thomas Payne, who speaks of Isaiah and Jeremiah as "impostors and liars," nor with extreme rationalists, who hold their prophecies to be "predictions after the event;" but with critics who believe that the fall of Babylon was really predicted, but not by the prophets named in the Bible. Of these critics there are two classes, both of whom are embraced in our argument, for both more or less deny that Scriptural prophecy includes the detailed prediction of distant events. The critics of one class hold that the foresight, although limited, is directly due to Divine inspiration; and the others hold that it is a quickened perception of approaching events, through a deep moral persuasion of God's righteous government combined with intellectual power. As regards personal belief, we gladly acknowledge the great difference between the recognition and the denial of Divine inspiration in the predictions; but in other respects these critics may be regarded as belonging to one class, for their views of prophecy nearly agree.

There is no sound reason for limiting to purely Messianic prophecies the great Scriptural rule of prophetic interpretation that the prophets "searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; unto whom

it was revealed that, *not unto themselves*, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you." The principle now maintained, though partially true, is combined with destructive error. It is held by many that the great truth of a divine Deliverance for men is embodied more or less clearly in all the Scriptures; but that Scriptural prophecy takes its rise in the circumstances, the sins, and the wants of the time; that it is addressed to the men of the existing generation; and that, while predicting the sure consequences of right and wrong, it does not embrace the details of distant and complicated events.

This principle of interpretation, as applied by the critics, goes far to overthrow the most important prophecies in the Scriptures. The dates and authors of nearly all the great prophecies in the Old Testament are altered so as to change their character completely. Prophecy is assigned to a time so near to its fulfilment that the critic who accepts and the critic who denies its supernatural character, may be very nearly or quite agreed regarding its date, its author, and all the circumstances in which it was delivered; while one ascribes its origin to Divine inspiration, and the other to the highest human sagacity. They are of one accord in refusing to it so distant a date as would be accepted by all as the proof of a foresight altogether and conspicuously supernatural.

The exile theory of the prophecies against Babylon lies near the source of what is called modern thought in Biblical researches. It took an early place as a great historical conjecture for the overthrow of what are now slighted as traditional opinions; and has nearly ceased to be discussed by the school of higher critics, being held by them as proved. It is, therefore, one of the fairest of all questions by which to test the value of the conclusions at which the new Biblical criticism has arrived, in so far as it would alter the authors and dates of the books of the Old Testament.

Biblical criticism is of the highest value in its own sphere; it has urgent and daily increasing claims on all of us in the ministry,

and on all our students, and the Church is deeply indebted to the able scholars who have made it the business of their lives. But when it leaves its proper ground, and roams into historical conjecture, it is apt to be irrational in the extreme, and to become as thoroughly unscientific as it is evidently unhistorical. The severe and minute study of Biblical critics is not favourable to the reasoning powers, because its almost irrepressible tendency is to hang very weighty conclusions on very slender threads; and although a study so laborious might be expected to work as a check on the excesses of fancy, few classes of men are more liable to be carried away with groundless conjectures. They appear as if they held that whatever is not supernatural may therefore be natural and probable; and in their zeal to avoid the miraculous, they are apt to frame supposititious histories, with little respect for historical likelihood, and with no regard whatever for the barrier of moral impossibility. The mistake of a single author poring over a subject till he starts some impossible theory out of it, is a snare into which any writer may fall; but criticism is discredited when such theories are adopted and made their own by a school of critics.

The well known prophets in Babylon who ventured at an early period of the exile to foretell a speedy restoration for Israel, brought upon themselves a painful death at the hands of the haughty king, who effectually intercepted the expected return in their own case by burning them in the fire—a favourite form of punishment with the Chaldean monarch. This prompt severity made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of the captives; and ought to have had weight enough with their modern critics to dissuade them from finding for the great Scriptural prophecies against Babylon a later but equally Babylonian origin, which would certainly have added a second fiery roll of sufferers near the close of the captivity.

But the predictions of Jeremiah against Babylon were written nearly seventy years and those of Isaiah at least one hundred and

seventy before the great event. Prophecies at once so distant and so detailed many critics hold to be impossible, and others to be in the highest degree improbable; and they have conceived for them this unknown Babylonian source, which they present to us as a reasonable and likely origin for these writings.

It is most reasonable to believe that He who knoweth the end from the beginning should have inspired His chosen prophets to foretell clearly and at large the ruin of Babylon one or two centuries before its fall. The prediction of its capture by Cyrus more than a century before his birth cannot be regarded as so marvellous as the central institution of Israel, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. Receiving the Bible as the Word of God, our stand is on the ground that its prophecies are to be received as altogether true, however distant their indicated time, and however improbable the predicted event. But when critics reject the Scriptural dates and authors of great prophecies, we are entitled to demand that their own account of their date and authorship shall be within the limits of what is historically probable and morally possible; and if the origin assigned by them is shown to be impossible, then even on their own ground they have laboured in vain to overthrow the received date and authorship.

2. In stating more fully the conjecture itself, we notice first the prediction of the fall of Babylon as given in the Bible, and then as it is altered by the critics.

(1.) *The fall of Babylon as predicted in the Bible.*

"The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see :

"Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isa. xiii. 1, 19).

"Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground" (Isa. xxi. 9).

"Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground : there is no throne. . . . Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans : for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms" (Isa. xlvii. 1, 5).

"The word that the Lord spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet :

“Because of the wrath of the Lord it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues” (Jer. l. 1, 13).

(2.) *The authors and dates of the predictions as altered by the modern critics.*

In the dates assigned to these prophecies there is a general and pretty close agreement among the scientific critics, if we omit those who regard some of them as written after the taking of the city, or those who take the prophecy in the twenty-first chapter, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen,” to be the description of an eye-witness who wrote it down while the capture was progressing to its completion. Excluding such extremes, the general date usually assigned is in the last decade of the Exile; and the specific date of each of the prophecies is sometimes conjectured with great minuteness, ranging from several years before to very close upon the event.

As regards the authors of these prophecies, the general opinion of the critics is that no name whatever can be attached to them. In his translation of the Prophets, Professor Reuss of Strasbourg has several sections which he entitles “Anonymes.” Under this title he classes about thirty-six chapters, or more than the half of the Prophecies of Isaiah, and two chapters of Jeremiah. Ewald, and other critics of the same school, hold similar views. The prophecies with which we are at present more immediately concerned are those against Babylon in the thirteenth, fourteenth, twenty-first, and last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, and the fifty-first and fifty-second of Jeremiah, all of which they hold to be anonymous, and to have been written near the close of the exile after Cyrus had begun his career of conquest.

The ascription of these predictions to prophets in Babylon shortly before its fall is a suggestion that calls for no critical knowledge or acuteness, and would most readily occur to any reader who was disposed to question the magnitude of prophecy. But criticism ought not to have accepted the conjecture without thoroughly sifting its soundness and its value,

The conception that the writers of these prophecies are unknown, and that they lived in Babylon, directly contradicts the Scriptures. The latter half of Isaiah equally with the first is assigned to that prophet in the Old Testament, and is constantly cited under his name in the New; and the prophecies in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters are not only included in the book of Isaiah, but are expressly entitled, "The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see."

The prophecy in the fiftieth and fifty-first chapters of Jeremiah is introduced in the first verse with the words, "The word that the Lord spake against Babylon, and against the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet." After the close of the prophecy we read, "So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; then shalt thou say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah" (vers. 60-64).

Four times this prophecy is expressly ascribed to Jeremiah, and not merely in the title, but in the narrative; but notwithstanding the clear testimony of Scripture, Kuenen, Reuss, and other critics, some with more and others with less hesitation, ascribe it to an anonymous exile in Babylon. Ewald calls it "the earliest example of a piece written in the name of one of Israel's older prophets;" and Professor Oort, taking the same ground, writes with profane boldness, as if he had been in Babylon and had seen it all: "One of the exiles composed an elaborate oracle on the humiliation which the Chaldean gods and Babylon itself would endure

because Nebuchadnezzar had shattered Israel. The writer put this prediction into the mouth of Jeremiah, and declared that this man of God wrote it during the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign." This view makes the whole prophecy a deliberate forgery, and not only worthless but detestable.

More reverent critics satisfy themselves with calling the writer anonymous; an affirmation directly contrary to the Bible, which states repeatedly that the writer was Jeremiah. A recognition of that prophet as the author is incompatible with any theory that would limit such predictions to nearly approaching events. But to call the prophecy anonymous is a misapplication of language, for its author could not be named either more expressly or more fully; and if it was not written by Jeremiah, the circumstantial narrative of its origin and history cannot have been a mistake, but is a deliberate falsehood embodied in the sacred writings.

For the existence of such anonymous prophets, either one or several, in Babylon during the exile there is not the faintest trace of historical proof, either as regards the prophets themselves, or the effect of their writings on the people at the time, or on the memories of the nation. Confessedly there is no such evidence outside the Bible; and the Bible itself, as we have seen, gives no ground and leaves no room for the supposition. The Scriptural prophecies against Babylon, far from being nameless, are expressly assigned to two of the greatest names in the roll of the prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah; and there is not the slightest intimation of the existence of a single anonymous prophet in Babylon. At the beginning of the exile there were false prophets there; and their names are not only recorded, but were handed down with a note of infamy in the lips of the exiles. In the period of Exile there lived two great prophets in Babylon, Ezekiel and Daniel, one in the city, and the other in the kingdom; their names are attached to their prophecies, and have come down to us among the great prophets of Scripture. Of anonymous prophets in Babylon, either one or more, either true or false, Scripture acknowledges none.

CHAPTER II.

*THE RESPECTFUL LOYALTY OF THE KNOWN EXILE
PROPHETS TO THE CHALDEAN KINGS.*

WHEN we are asked to believe in supposititious prophets of whom we have no record in Scripture and no tradition out of it, our first recourse is to the known prophets of the period, that by comparing them together we may ascertain if the new conception is consistent with history and in so far worthy of consideration, or if it is a hasty and crude idea with no verisimilitude to commend it.

Now, in striking contrast to the character and conduct of the fictitious prophets of the critics, one of the most deeply marked features of the historical prophets in Babylon is their fidelity to the Chaldean kings. The exiles in Babylon and the prophets who lived amongst them found themselves placed under a very peculiar dispensation of Divine providence. They were exiled not only from their own land, but from the house of their God and His consecrated dwelling in the earth; and although the holy temple was now lying desolate, its stones were dear to them, not merely for the memories of the past, but for the hopes of the future, when it should be raised again from its ruins. Daniel in Babylon prayed with his windows open towards Jerusalem. The captives of Judah had from the beginning of their exile the Divine promise of a sure return to their own land after the lapse of seventy years; and they refused to sing in the land of their bondage the joyful songs of the Lord's house, counting it better for their tongue to cleave to the roof of their mouth than for them to forget Jerusalem. It was the

Lord's will that they should never reckon themselves at home in Babylon; but always remain strangers, even as the followers of Christ are now pilgrims in the earth, looking for their own city in the better country above.

But while the Jews were, therefore, never to intermingle and unite with the Chaldeans, they were expressly commanded to seek the peace of Babylon, to give their sons and their daughters in marriage, to build houses and dwell in them, to plant gardens and eat the fruit of them, in that vast city within whose walls the reaper "handled the sickle in the time of harvest." They were to be in all respects peaceful, dutiful, and loyal subjects of the kingdom in which they were captives; not to conspire against it or make efforts for its overthrow, but to promote its welfare and pray for its safety.

This double attitude of intense affection for their own land and of true loyalty to the land of their exile was very peculiar; yet the ordained duty to both was plain and unmistakable, and its fulfilment is clearly brought out in the exiles with whose history we are best acquainted, Daniel and his three companions, and the prophet Ezekiel.

1. *The Book of Daniel.*—The historical truth of this book is denied by most of the critics who hold that the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah against Babylon are not authentic, and to any argument derived from it they will attach no weight; but for those who duly reverence all the Holy Scriptures, it is interesting to note the beautiful consistency and harmony of the whole.

Daniel and his friends in exile accept of high offices in the government of the Chaldean kingdom. Against the three noble youths who were set over the province of Babylon their enemies can bring no charge of unfaithfulness or disloyalty, and they can only accuse them of supreme devotion to the living God. In Daniel the most steadfast fidelity to his God and his country is combined with the most faithful loyalty to the King of Babylon. When he is called to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he opens

the interpretation of the Divine judgment that is to fall upon him with the dutiful and kindly preface: "My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies;" and concludes it with a respectful counsel of repentance, "if it might be a lengthening of his tranquillity."

At Belshazzar's feast, while the revelry is resounding through the palace, the enemy is already stealing into the city by the bed of the river; but even in that last night of the Chaldean kingdom, it is at the king's command, and not from his own impulse, that Daniel interprets the mysterious handwriting on the wall. He boldly reproves the king for the sins that had provoked the Most High to stretch out the hand that wrote his doom over against the candlestick that lighted the banquet hall; but he neither invokes the Divine vengeance on Babylon, nor afterwards refuses the high honours with which the king proceeds to invest him.

In the sequel, when the Chaldean dominion has been quite overthrown, and when he understands, by the Sacred Books, that the time has come for the restoration of Zion, he obeys the Lord's command by Jeremiah: "Then shall ye go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you, and I will turn away your captivity;" and he sets himself to seek God by prayer and supplication for the desired deliverance. But he uses no other means except prayer when God's full time had come; and during the whole Chaldean dominion he never denounces the government under which he lived, and which he served for seventy years.

2. *The Book of Ezekiel.*—The other Babylonian prophet, Ezekiel, is acknowledged by all the critics, however extreme, as one of the exiles; and of all the exiles the prophet on the banks of the Chebar was best entitled to claim toleration in foretelling the fall of the power under which he dwelt, because in the earlier years of his own captivity he had faithfully warned his countrymen that Jerusalem would be delivered into the hands of the Chaldeans. But as well after the taking of the city as before it, we find in him

the very same attitude as in Daniel toward Israel and toward Babylon ; of ardent attachment to his land and to his people, and of the most perfect loyalty to the government under which he lives as a captive.

The delicate handling of prophetic truth, as affecting this double relation, is brought out in a most remarkable manner in the thirty-sixth chapter of his prophecies. The prophet has uttered his oracles against the heathen nations, against Moab and Ammon, against Tyre and Sidon, against Philistia, Edom, and Egypt. Babylon alone has been omitted, and it may be said not unnaturally hitherto, because Babylon is the instrument of Divine judgment against these seven nations. But the prophecy in the thirty-sixth chapter is for the land of Israel, which is now desolate, and has been laid waste for years under the destroying sway of Babylon. This prophecy contains a promise of a new heart and other promises for Israel, that stretch onward past our own time ; but its predictions are very specific on the return of the people, the rebuilding of the cities, and the restoration of the wastes : "The enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are our's in possession. . . . But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel ; for they are at hand to come. . . . And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers" (vers. 2, 8, 28). For this end the one great and essential event is the breaking of the yoke of Babylon, to set Israel at liberty to return to his own land ; yet the prophet, speaking as he is moved by the Holy Ghost, never speaks of Babylon, but carefully avoids the mention of the name, even when referring to the enemies from whom Israel is to be delivered : "Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart. . . . I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land" (vers. 5, 24). Idumea and Egypt, and all heathen

countries together, did not stand in the way of Israel's restoration like Babylon alone, whose iron yoke it was that must be broken to set Israel free; and, apart from the immediate moving of the Holy Spirit, no motives can be assigned for the very remarkable, and it would almost have seemed impossible omission, except obedience to the Divine command to pray for the peace of that city, and desire for the safety of his countrymen by not provoking the anger of the king who held them in his grasp. It is the Lord Himself who speaks through the lips of the prophet, and his mind is one; to deliver Israel into the power of Babylon, to subject them as loyal subjects under that dominion, and to save them in the end by his own right arm alone in answer to their prayers. So Ezekiel concludes his prophecy with the words: "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

The invocations of Divine vengeance on Babylon, which conclude the hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm, form no exception to the submissive attitude enjoined on the exiles and accepted by them, because the Psalm was evidently written after the release of the captives. On returning to Jerusalem they rehearse their past condition when they sat and wept by the rivers of Babylon; but the city was not destroyed when it was taken by Cyrus, and as before the Exile, so now after it, the still unfulfilled judgments are prophetically announced against Babylon (Is. xiii. 18; Ps. cxxxviii. 8).*

* "There can be *no doubt whatever* as to the time when this Psalm was written. It expresses the feelings of an exile who has but just returned from the land of his captivity. In all probability the writer was a Levite, who was one of the first, as soon as the edict of Cyrus was published, to return to Jerusalem. He is again in his own land. He sees again the old familiar scenes. Yet the change is terrible: the spoiler has been in his home, his vines and his fig-trees have been cut down, the house of his God is a heap of ruins. He takes his harp, the companion of his exile, the cherished relic of happier days,—the harp which he could not string at the bidding of his conquerors by the waters of Babylon; and now with faltering hand he sweeps the strings, first in low plaintive melancholy cadence pouring out his griefs, and then with a loud rush of wild and strong music, answering to the wild and strong numbers of his verse, he raises the pæan of vengeance over his foes."—PEROWNE.

"That the Psalm was sung after the return from Babylon is evident from the words in ver. 1-3, 'we sat, we wept.' It was at the second capture by Darius Hystaspes, eighteen years after the first, that Babylon's hundred gates were laid waste and her lofty walls prostrated. It is to this event that the statement (v. 8) must refer; for it is this properly that formed the first and the last destruction. The Divine retributive righteousness is taught, precisely as here, by our Lord in Matt. vii. 2: 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.'"—HENGSTENBERG.

Along with Daniel and Ezekiel there were two other prophets in the exile; who began, indeed, to prophesy only after the close of the captivity, but one of whom, Haggai, has been reasonably supposed to have seen "the glory of the first house," while the other, Zechariah, was also living in Babylon. If the latter half of Isaiah was written there, one of them might have been the author, so far as the time is concerned, and his name would have given authority to the predictions. Yet the writing of both is so different from this latter portion of Isaiah, that no critic assigns it to either. The evidence from these two prophets thus agrees with that of the other two, and is quite against an exile origin for Isaiah.

The imaginary discovery of the critics of an exile prophet in Babylon, who wrote like the prince of the prophets in Jerusalem, or rather their fanciful supposition in the failure of any discovery, is thus proved to be contrary to all the historical facts of the period. There is no historical likelihood that the Babylonian exile produced any prophet like Isaiah; and there is ample proof that if such a prophet had been raised up, it would have been no part of his Divine commission to denounce the King of Babylon, but only to speak of Israel's restoration like the exiled prophet Ezekiel.

In referring to Daniel we ought to have noted that in the latter half of the book, in the seventh and eighth chapters, there is the record of two visions which the prophet saw in the reign of Belshazzar, after Cyrus had entered on his course. The terms of the first vision are more general. In the second there is an express mention of the Median and Persian dominion, and likewise of the Grecian; and throughout the prophecy we find the same marked reserve as in Ezekiel regarding Babylon, which is never named nor its destruction referred to, although the two-horned ram of Media and Persia is represented as conquering with irresistible power. In both the great Prophets of the Exile there is a striking harmony of silence on the doom of Babylon even when foretelling great events which involved its fall.

CHAPTER III.

THE UNSPARING DENUNCIATIONS OF THE CHALDEAN KINGS BY THE OLDER PROPHETS IN JERUSALEM.

SIDE by side with the historical prophets of the Exile, Daniel and Ezekiel, let us look at the prophecies which the critics on their own exclusive authority allege to have been published in Babylon. It is impossible to conceive a greater contrast than we find between the true and the fictitious predictions of the Exile; between the prophecies actually given by the God of Israel to His exiled servants, and the older prophecies theoretically assigned to them by the critics; the assiduous avoiding of offence to the rulers in the first, and the severe and accumulated denunciation of those rulers in the second.

These prophecies in addressing Babylon and its king contain no suppliant appeals for mercy to the captives, and no calm remonstrance with the great monarch in whose power they are. In accosting Israel they summon them by no call to aid in their own rescue by taking arms against their oppressors, or by otherwise helping their deliverers. Except for the comforting assurance of the bright day of Israel's return, they are without any sufficient object in the Exile; and that assurance had been already given to Israel, not by anonymous writers, but by the well-accredited prophet Ezekiel.

But they denounce in the strongest terms the cruelty, oppression, and wickedness of the King of Babylon; they foretell for him a degradation as vile as his throne is now exalted; they predict the

overthrow of the city and the destruction of its fondly cherished gods; they exhort the exiles to flee from within its walls after its capture; they name the conqueror as approaching with his resistless arms; they portray the faintheartedness of the Chaldean soldiers, and they call on the hostile forces to prepare for the assault of the city, which they triumph over as if already fallen:

“How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked; . . . he who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke. . . . The worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee” (Isa. xiv. 4, 5, 6, 11). “Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; . . . Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground” (Isa. xxi. 2, 9). “Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates. . . . Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle. . . . Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon. . . . Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. . . . Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob” (Isa. xlv. 1; xlvi. 1; xlvii. 1, 5; xlviii. 20). “Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the Lord. . . . How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! . . . The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of His temple. . . . Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes. . . . The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight. . . . One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger

to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end. . . . For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come. . . . The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say" (Jer. l. 14, 23, 28; li. 28, 30, 31, 33, 35).

Now, we know certainly that prophecies against Babylon of a similar character were written in Jerusalem before the Exile by the prophet Habakkuk; and his prophecy is acknowledged to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem even by critics, like Dr. Samuel Davidson, who disallow the more distant prophecies of Isaiah and the more detailed predictions of Jeremiah. He foretells the desolation of Judea by the Chaldeans: "Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not their's; . . . they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat; . . . they shall gather the captivity as the sand; . . . they shall deride every stronghold; for they shall heap dust, and take it" (Hab. i. 6-10). The prophet next comforts his own people: "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die" (ver. 12). Then he severely denounces the King of Babylon: "Who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? . . . Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee" (Hab. ii. 5-8).

We have thus, on the one hand, a recognised prophet in Jerusalem denouncing and threatening the King of Babylon for devastating Judea, and "devouring the man that is more righteous than he" (Hab. i. 13); and, on the other hand, we have two known prophets in Babylon respecting the Divine command to "seek the peace of the city," and carefully avoiding to announce its certain doom before it has come. The history, therefore, of both periods is quite against the conjecture of the critics. It is clearly in favour of the prophets in Jerusalem foretelling woe to Babylon and its king; and it is decidedly against any prophet in Babylon issuing such a prediction.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INFATUATION OF PUBLISHING SUCH THREATENINGS IN BABYLON, AND THE CULPABILITY OF PUBLISHING THEM ANONYMOUSLY.

IT is maintained by the scientific critics that the latter half of Isaiah, and the other prophecies against Babylon, can be understood in a natural and living way only by assigning them to the period of the Exile; and on similar grounds it might be held that the fifty-third chapter, with its natural and vivid description of the Messiah's sufferings, must have been written after the day of Pentecost. But it is only on a hasty glance at the surface of the history that it could be supposed that such publications were lifelike and natural in the position of the exiles. On the contrary, every consideration of reason proves—

1. *The infatuation of publishing such prophecies in Babylon.*

Let us look at the first of the short prophecies in Isaiah against Babylon, of which Ewald says that "these small pieces proceeded from Babel itself," and that "being rapidly produced and sent into the world as fly-sheets, they were published without any name attached;" and which amongst ourselves are, in like manner, spoken of as anonymous broadsides. The prophecy in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Isaiah has forty-five verses; and only two of these foretell the restoration of Israel (xiv. 1, 2), while the rest consists of woes against Babylon, its city, its citizens, and especially its king. There is every utterance that

can wound his pride, awaken his fear, and arouse his anger, with the constant avowal that the prophecy is by the God of Israel and for Israel's sake: "I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the Lord. . . . Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them. . . . For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel" (chaps. xiii. 17; xiv. 1, 2).

A feeble colony of captive foreigners cast contempt on the majesty of the king. They accuse him of cruelty and wickedness, and they summon his enemies to take his city, and to slay himself, his children, and his subjects. They publish their prophecies as fly-leaves or broadsides, writing them on an open page, and circulating them among the exiles. Although they attach no personal signatures, they speak in the name of Israel and of his God; and only for Israel's sake they invoke and predict the terrible doom of Babylon, its sovereign, and its people. No helpless community of captives, that was not bereft of reason, would have allowed such a writing to be circulated amongst them, for in their exile they had still their elders over them with some authority. The mildest of monarchs would not have suffered it for an instant; and if the King of Babylon was as proud and as cruel as he is pictured in these prophecies, no Jew in Babylon could hope to escape with his life. If the Chaldean ruler could not arrest the hostile march of the conqueror of other nations, he could easily exterminate avowed traitors within his own city and kingdom; he could quench in their own blood their bright prophecies for Zion; and their threatenings against him he would in all likelihood fulfil upon themselves, and leave to Israel "neither name nor remnant, neither son nor nephew."

This note on the first of the alleged anonymous prophecies applies in substance to them all: Isa. xxi. 1, 10; xl. to lxvii.; Jer. l. 50, 51. There is, indeed, abundant consolation to Israel in the latter half of Isaiah, and not a little in the prophecy of Jeremiah; but they equally denounce Babylon and its king, and they exult triumphantly in their destruction. Nothing can explain the

suicidal madness that is imputed to the captives in issuing such threats; for with all their longing to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple, and with all the hardships which many might suffer, they were not as a people driven to despair. They dwelt in their own houses, ate the fruit of their own gardens, worshipped their own God by the river sides, and when they were set at liberty, many of them were not prepared to leave the comforts of their foreign home, and return to the desolate land of their fathers. As a people, they had no cause to rush on self-destruction by circulating such threats against their rulers.

In the same predictions and solemn denunciations from the Lord in the prophecies of Isaiah two hundred years before, the case is entirely different. Consolation was treasured there for Israel, and there the God of Israel made the express prediction of remote events the proof to Israel and to the world that He is the God of the whole earth, and that He knoweth the end from the beginning. An ancient prophecy, forming part of a series of older books, quietly kept amongst a foreign people, might easily escape either the curiosity or the jealousy of a proud race of kings.

The later prophecy of Jeremiah bears a special character from the symbolical act of sinking it in the Euphrates, so like that prophet's method of teaching, and so unlike the publication of an open broadsheet. The prophet would certainly retain a copy for himself, the witnesses who heard it read on the banks of the river would remember its substance, and communicate it to their brethren and to their children, and a copy of it might be quietly preserved in Babylon. If it became known to Nebuchadnezzar, that king had a high esteem for Jeremiah, to whose predictions of his own singular prosperity he owed so much; there was nothing in the prophecy that affected himself personally, for the greater part of seventy years was to intervene before its fulfilment; and there was little fear of his resenting what he had every cause to respect as a divinely inspired prophecy of the fall of his kingdom at a period that was still remote.

In all these prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah against Babylon, and in their lasting fulfilment, we see, even at the present day, the greatness, majesty, and power of the God of nations, the wonders of His providence, the sovereignty of His dominion, His omnipotent ordering and omniscient foresight of all events, with the exercise of His right to speak to kings and to kingdoms according to their character and their deserts. But if, in direct contradiction alike to the Old Testament and the New, these prophecies are held to have been published in Babylon toward the close of the Exile, they are characterised by an infatuation which, in all historical likelihood, could only have resulted in the extirpation of the Jewish people by "the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation," at a crisis in their history, when apprehension of danger must have aggravated their bitterness and hastened their revenge.

Ewald's peculiar theory that the latter half of Isaiah was not written in Babylon like the shorter prophecies, but in Egypt, makes no material difference in our argument. These prophecies, written in the Hebrew language, are addressed to the Jews in Babylon, to whom they must have been sent, if they were not to remain without purpose or use. If they were circulated without a name amongst the Babylonian Jews with the permission of their elders, the Chaldeans must have treated them as a national production, while the distant author would escape the dangers in which he recklessly involved his captive people. But the general opinion of the modern critics is given by Dr. Samuel Davidson, who says that the Deutero-Isaiah was one of the exiles, and lived in Babylon.

2. The culpability of publishing these threats anonymously.

It is a strangely misjudging conception of the critics that anonymous prophecies could bring to the Jewish captives any assurance of their deliverance. By the prophets of hope at the beginning of the Exile many of them had been deceived; and the slaying of these prophets "before their eyes" had left on the mind of the nation a warning not soon to be effaced against being elated and

seduced by professedly prophetic promises of a speedy return to their own land. In their position, therefore, it was above all things essential that a prophet of restoration should produce the surest credentials of his Divine mission, and evidently no such assurance could ever be given by means of an unsigned fly-leaf. If the prophecies of the taking of Babylon had never been written by Isaiah and Jeremiah, it was a dangerous snare for Israel to believe, on the assurance of an anonymous "pamphlet of the day" (Ewald), that the Persian king was their appointed deliverer. By thoughtful men amongst the captives the unsealed manifesto would have been rejected as the device of an impostor, and denounced with the olden exile curse of the false sons of Kolaiah and Maaseiah.

But it was impossible in the position of the exiles for any good man to have written such predictions without attaching his name. The prophets in Babylon at the beginning of the Exile foretold a speedy return of Israel to Zion; and their verbal predictions were far less likely to have come to the knowledge of the king than written tracts. They were false in their prophecies, and infamous in their lives; but they can hardly be held more guilty than the fictitious prophets of the modern critics. Ahab, the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah, the son of Maaseiah, did not publish their prophecies on anonymous broadsheets to shield themselves and leave others to die for their misdeeds. They avowed their own hopes of Israel's return, as well as encouraged their fellows in exile; as martyrs to a falsehood they sacrificed their lives; and they left their names for a curse to be taken up by all Israel against any who should follow them in Babylon with similar false predictions: "The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire" (Jer. xxix. 22).

The Jews in Babylon had therefore a very special and memorable warning of the doom that awaited the prophets who should issue predictions of Israel's restoration by the breaking of Babylon's yoke; and the man who added denunciations against the king might expect his furnace to be heated "seven times more

than it was wont to be heated." Ezekiel's case, as we have seen, was exceptional, because he had for many years counselled the submission of the Jews to the Chaldeans, and foretold the successful career of the Chaldean monarch; but in predicting the restoration of Israel, he has not a word of reproach or of threat for Babylon, or even of deliverance from its yoke. In these circumstances, if any later prophet of consolation had arisen among the captives, he would have scrupulously refrained from denouncing their present rulers, both from the command of God through Jeremiah and from the dangers it involved for Israel. But the prophecies in Isaiah xiii., xiv., and Jeremiah l., li. are full of such denunciations; and Isaiah xl. to lxvi. calls Cyrus by name as the conqueror of Babylon, and exults over her fall: "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans; . . . for thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me" (xlvii. 1, 10).

To publish larger predictions without the prophet's name, or to circulate the lesser ones as anonymous fly-sheets, would have been an act highly culpable. The author knew well that, if an exterminating decree did not go forth at once against the whole nation, his saving of his own life by the cowardly concealment of his name would create a search for every Jew in Babylon who could have been the writer, to be followed by a dreadful death for all on whom suspicion might rest. The most ordinary chance of such an issue would have made every good man shrink from the thought of such concealment. But the circumstances of the exiles, in the well remembered example of the fatal history of the previous prophets in Babylon, and in the present jealousy of the Chaldean rulers awakened by the victorious arms of Cyrus, must have left no doubt of the execution of the severest measures. In so critical a case we may well believe that no Jew in all the nation would be found capable of such an act; and nothing can be more certain than that such writings could never have

had the Divine sanction, or have been the laudable work of holy men.

One of the great positions of the leaders of modern thought in Biblical criticism, one in which they are generally agreed in the midst of other discordances, the ascription of the prophecies against Babylon to anonymous prophets during the exile, is thus proved to be *impossible*. To hold that these prophets were inspired, or were righteous men, and that they published these prophecies anonymously, is to adopt both halves of a plain contradiction. There is no outlet from this conclusion. If these alleged prophets were men worthy of the highest honour, which the critics not only allow but earnestly maintain, it was clearly impossible that they could have issued their prophecies as anonymous publications in the Babylonian exile. The worst of the nation would not readily have stained their hands with such a transaction as the view of the critics, undesignedly but necessarily, imputes to the noblest of all the prophets, the author of the latter part of Isaiah, whose words have been a solace and a light to the Church for thousands of years. To call the writer truly "great" is to deny that he was "anonymous;" and to call him "anonymous" is to deny that he was "great." If he was not Isaiah, we know nothing of him except by the writings which have made his memory immortal as one of the greatest and best and most patriotic of men; and if he was not Isaiah, these very writings by being anonymous degrade him to the lowest level.

The prophet sent of old to Nineveh takes his life in his hand, walks through the broad streets of the city, cries aloud, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown;" the proud Assyrians repent, and their city is spared. In the great city by which Nineveh was outrivalled and dethroned, the prophets created by the modern critics publish their oracular burdens: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground. . . . Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about; all ye that bend the bow shoot at her,

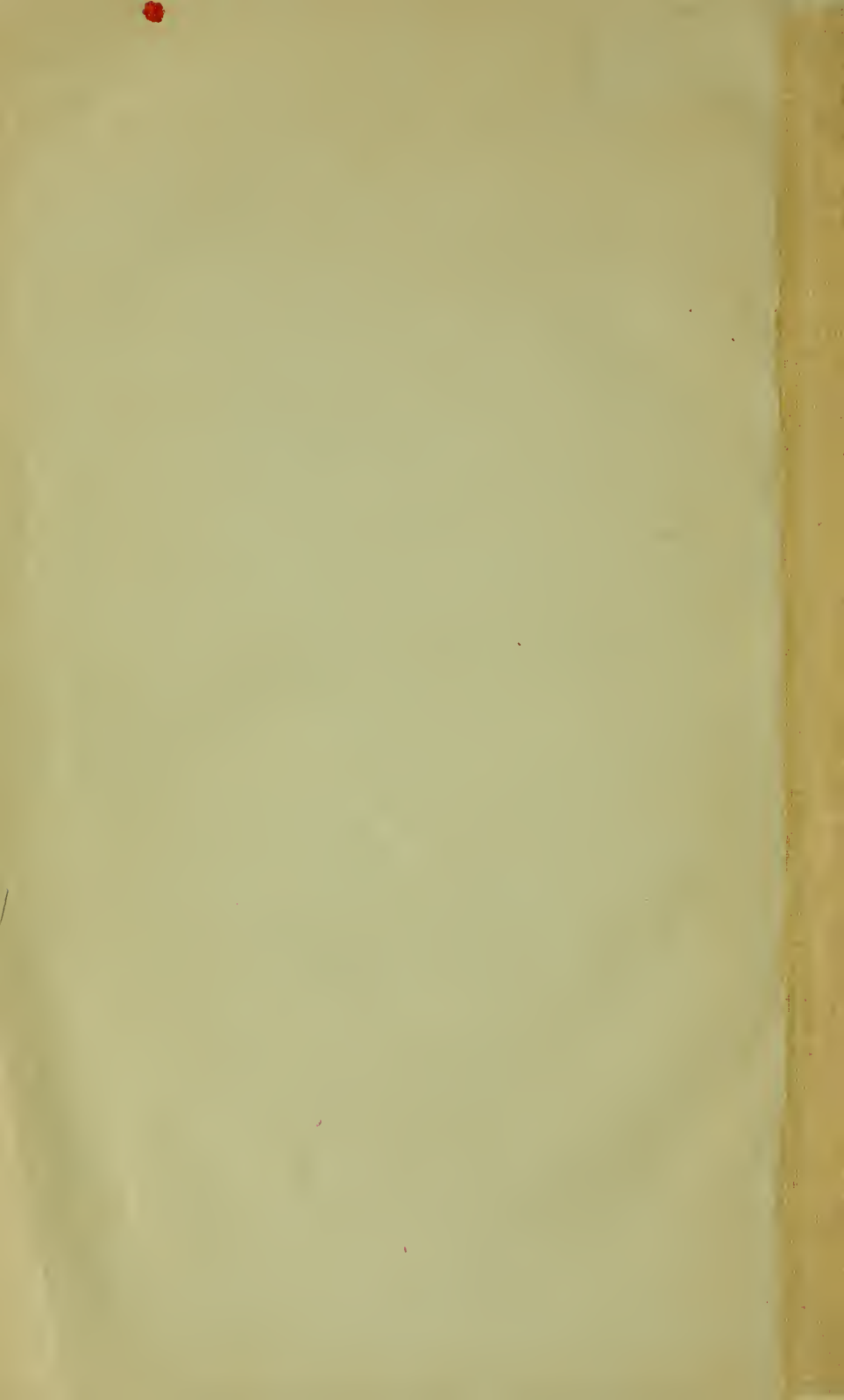
spare no arrows, for she hath sinned against the Lord." Babylon remains proud, sensual, impenitent; and for the prophets who have predicted her doom, there is nothing left but the burning furnace that consumed the seers who preceded them. But beneath the mask of their anonymous fly-leaves they lie safely hid; and in cold blood they look on their friends and brethren exposed on their account to certain death at the hands of the haughty and justly offended king. Such must have been the prophets whom the new critics first create and then commend with their highest laudations; whom they ask us to admire, and for whom Isaiah and Jeremiah are to be cast behind our backs.


The criticism that calls itself scientific confidently refuses to own as genuine the sublime oracles of Isaiah and Jeremiah against Babylon, because it conceives either that all supernatural prediction is impossible, or that predictions so distant from the event, although not impossible, are highly improbable. We hold that God, to whom all the future is known, can reveal it to men; and we firmly believe in the "sure word of prophecy" as we have it in the Bible, however far beyond mere human foresight. In holding these prophecies to be genuine we are not chargeable with a blind and bigoted adherence to an effete tradition. But, on the contrary, when we are asked by the critics to give up the genuineness of two of the most important chapters in Jeremiah, and of the larger and nobler half of the prophecies of Isaiah, because they contain those marvellous predictions against Babylon which remain in their striking fulfilment at this hour, and to assign them to anonymous prophets in the Exile, we are called to sacrifice not merely faith, but reason, and history, and sound criticism, for a crude and impossible conjecture.

Oh that grace and wisdom were now granted to Scotland, and especially to our own beloved Church, to hear in this day of trial and of sifting the old prophetic warning and counsel to Jerusalem:—


“They have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up.


“THUS SAITH THE LORD, STAND IN THE WAYS, AND SEE, AND ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK THEREIN, AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.”—Jer. xviii. 15; vi. 16.



Gaylord 

PAMPHLET BINDER

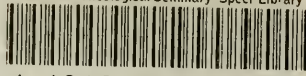
 Syracuse, N. Y.

 Stockton, Calif.

BS649 B3S9

The fall of Babylon : its prediction not

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00055 9700